



THIS HOME IS SITUATED ON A CLIFF 600' ABOVE THE PACIFIC, HAS UNBELIEVABLE VIEWS OF THE COASTLINE AND SCENIC PFEIFFER BEACH.



Green Roof, Blue Water

Living Sustainably on the Big Sur Coast of California

by Ann Hill, CEO, Ann Hill Communications



When Zach and Langka Treadwell of Los Angeles, Calif., began looking for a vacation home in Big Sur several years ago, they didn't like any of the existing houses they toured.

None seemed right for an active, vibrant family with four small children. Instead they fell in love with a 70-acre parcel of land on Dani Ridge overlooking the Big Sur coastline.

The site, nestled on a cliff 600' above the

Pacific, had unbelievable views of the coastline and scenic Pfeiffer Beach. It was situated on a windy hillside, accessible only by a winding road that runs throughout the narrow canyon. For the Treadwells, it was a

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THE GRASS ROOF SOFTENS THE VIEW FROM THE TOP OF THE RIDGE AND ALSO PROVIDES NATURAL INSULATION FOR THE HOME.

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perfect place to build, despite all the building and land-use restrictions. The Treadwells wanted an architect who could navigate through the building restrictions as well as design a contemporary, informal home that would make the most of the site. They settled on **Carver + Schicketanz Architects** of Carmel, Calif., a firm known

for its fresh, environmentally conscious design.

Despite the large acreage, lead architect **Mary Ann Schicketanz** determined that there was only a narrow sliver of land right next to the road that was available for building, given Big Sur's stringent land-use requirements. "Local codes prevented us from building on any of the dramatic west facing slopes," said **Schicketanz**, one of the firm's two principals. "The building area was confined to a narrow, gently sloped meadow next to the access road."

Carver + Schicketanz cut a notch into the hillside and positioned the 1900-sq.ft. home on the carved-out shelf behind a retaining wall. The hillside extends on top of the house to create a roof of native grasses. The grass roof softens the view from the top of the ridge and also provides natural insulation for the home, as well as a sound barrier. The roof also gives oxygen to the atmosphere and limits rain runoff.

Carver + Schicketanz worked with local horticulturalist Fred Balzerini to find the right native grasses for the green roof. Older green roof systems are hard to engineer because they require 12" to 18" of soil on top, making them very heavy. **Carver + Schicketanz** specified a Hydrotech roofing system, which uses only a few inches of soil and needs no special structure. They planted native grasses such as California oat and red fescue, so that the roof only requires an annual pruning. The roof blends into two acres of native grasses that were restored by **Carver + Schicketanz** on the south side of the house to integrate the site further into the scenic landscape.

The house itself, ironically simple, features large amounts of glass, throughout its rectangular length, that open every part of the home to views of the coast meeting the Pacific. The exterior of the home has cedar siding, which is weathering to a silver grey patina. The structure sits lightly on a large stone patio that is cut into the hillside, with a stone-lined in-ground hot tub.



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Carver + Schicketanz designed a curving stone wall along the east side of the house, which provides privacy from the road to the ridge. A detached 376-sq.ft. garage is built underground, behind the curving stone wall. Utilities have no visual impact on the site because they are all underground; an underground water tank, electric, propane, and septic system.

A glass entry on the east side offers a dramatic transition from outdoors to indoors. The west side of the residence is all floor-to-ceiling glass. "The site's orientation, with the north side being built into the ridge, and a stone wall offering privacy for the east side, gives the house a low impact on the site, while still offering the owners a tremendous view on the south and west sides," said

Schicketanz. "That's what so special about this house."

The minimalist interiors reflect a Zen sensibility. The three bedroom, 3½ bathroom home includes a great-room facing west to overlook the Pacific, and an open kitchen. Recycled barn wood surrounds the fireplace in the great room. High windows cutting into the south and east side of the great room balance the bright light coming from the ocean.

The kitchen features walnut cabinets and a large earth-sheltered pantry that contains all of the food preparation equipment, leaving the kitchen uncluttered. The simpler use of fewer materials, such as the widespread use of limestone and concrete for all the counters, lowers the environmental impact. Energy efficiency is maximized by limestone floors which act as a passive solar system throughout the



house to retain the sun's heat in winter, and radiate heat at night. A hydronic radiant-heating system is used throughout the home.

"It's a very simple house, and a very efficient floor plan," said **Schicketanz**. "It has very durable materials. The design is spare, but not cold. It's structurally honest."

Today, the Treadwells enjoy retreating to their secluded coastal home and are proud to be living sustainably. The spectacular oceanfront site, efficient floor plan, and uncluttered interiors gives them a feeling of living "in a glass campsite" on the "cusp of another world." When Langka and Zach describe their home as "a jewel box in the clouds; the ultimate fantasy house, perfect for a therapeutic weekend getaway," it is clear that their Big Sur vision has been fulfilled.